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Executive Summary

Title: United States and Unconventional Warfare

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Thesis: Given the success of terrorist organizations against the United States since 1983 it is prudent to ask if nations will pursue unconventional engagements with the United States. According to the National Defense Strategy, "U.S. dominance in conventional warfare has given prospective adversaries, particularly non-state actors and their state sponsors, strong motivation to adopt asymmetric methods to counter our advantages. For this reason, we must display a mastery of irregular warfare comparable to that which we possess in conventional combat." What are the implications for future National Defense Strategies?

Discussion: The United States of America is no stranger to unconventional warfare. The American Revolution was the United States' first experience in terrorism and guerrilla warfare. The National Defense Strategy of 2008 states that the conventional warfare dominance of the United States will remain unchecked for the foreseeable future. However, despite its ability to defeat a conventional enemy, the United States has shown an inability to effectively deal with an enemy, either nation-state or non-state actor, that employs terrorism and asymmetric warfare as a means to engage in combat. The United States' conventional dominance has been no deterrent to terrorism. While the immediate adversaries in the Global War on Terrorism campaign are Al Qaeda and its allies, the reality exists that legitimate nation-states would resort to unconventional warfare operations in order to defeat the United States in a future conflict. Iran supports terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan. Additionally, Iran continues to develop nuclear technology. The United States must be prepared to face nations, like China, that have a far broader program for unconventional warfare that includes cyber, satellite, economic, diplomatic, and information warfare.

Conclusion: The United States needs to adopt a new definition of full-spectrum operations. Previously, this phrase was equated to the combined arms concept used by the military. In order to defeat an unconventional threat, full-spectrum operations must encompass all the instruments of national power and be able to meet the unconventional adversary at their level and, if possible, preempt their attack. It will require the United States to develop an unconventional strategy and the capability to employ that strategy. Through economics, diplomacy, information operations, propaganda, alliance building, military might, governmental subversion and fear, the United States can defeat an unconventional enemy.

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Preface

This project began as a study of when terrorism is a tactic and when is it a strategy. Gradually, the study began to focus on state sponsorship of terrorism. After further examination of state sponsored terrorism, asymmetric warfare and international relationships, the final thesis became a study of the history unconventional warfare, terrorism, and current and future threats to the United States and the ability of the United States to counter an adversary that will use partial or total unconventional warfare strategies in a conflict.

I would like to thank Professor Erin M. Simpson for serving as my mentor for this project. She helped me understand and frame the problem and guided my research. I would also like to thank Dr. Francis H. Marlo for teaching me the value of the instruments of national power and that "The Right of Might" is not the only solution to a nation's problems.

Introduction

Throughout history, irregular warfare in the forms of terrorism and guerrilla warfare has been the favored tool of combat of weaker nation-states and non-state actors when facing a more dominant conventional force. The choice to engage in unconventional warfare tactics transcends ethnic backgrounds, culture, economics, religion and climates.¹ Guerrilla warfare and terrorism has been a part of conflicts in Spain, France, the Philippines, Ireland, Yugoslavia, Greece, Kenya, Algeria, Vietnam, China, Lebanon, Iraq, and Afghanistan.² In a more modern perspective, "The context of irregular warfare (IW) is marked by a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population. IW favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary's power, influence, and will."³

The National Defense Strategy of 2008 states that the conventional warfare dominance of the United States will remain unchecked for the foreseeable future.⁴ However, with the nation's ability to defeat a conventional enemy, the United States has shown an inability to effectively deal with an enemy, either nation-state or non-state actor, that employs terrorism and asymmetric warfare as means to engage in combat. In referring to future adversaries, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates wrote, "What all these potential adversaries – from terrorist cells to rogue nations to rising powers – have in common is that they have learned that it is unwise to confront the United States directly on conventional military terms."⁵ The question therefore is not if a future adversary will use an unconventional approach to attack the United States, but when and how will a future adversary use an unconventional warfare strategy to confront the United States? And how will the United States respond?

While the immediate adversary in the campaign is Al Qaeda and its allies, the reality exists that legitimate nation-states would resort to unconventional warfare operations in order to defeat the United States in a future conflict.⁶ Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates wrote, "What is dubbed the war on terror is, in grim reality, a prolonged, worldwide irregular campaign."⁷

In fact, this is not new. The United States struggled throughout the 1980s to depose the state sponsored terrorism program of Libya.⁸ Since then, America's conventional dominance has been no deterrent to terrorism. The U.S. response to terrorist attacks in Lebanon and the Somalia ambush of U.S. forces in pursuit of General Mohamed Farrah Aidid has perpetuated the idea that while mighty in appearance, America is a cowardly paper tiger. More recently, this view of the U.S. has become a focal point for Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda propaganda.⁹

Given the success of terrorist organizations against the United States since 1983 it is prudent to ask if nations will pursue unconventional engagements with the United States. According to the National Defense Strategy, "U.S. dominance in conventional warfare has given prospective adversaries, particularly non-state actors and their state sponsors, strong motivation to adopt asymmetric methods to counter our advantages. For this reason, we must display a mastery of irregular warfare comparable to that which we possess in conventional combat."¹⁰ What are the implications for future National Defense Strategies?

For example, Iran supports terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran also continues to develop nuclear technology. In addition, the United States must be prepared to face nations, like China, that have a far broader program for irregular warfare that includes cyber, satellite, economic, diplomatic, and information warfare.¹¹

Before the United States can develop a strategy to counter unconventional threats, there needs to be an understanding of the enemy and how they employ an unconventional warfare strategy. For the purpose of this study, unconventional warfare is defined as the methods used by a nation-state or non-state actor in order to achieve their political goals principally using the non-kinetic means of diplomacy, information operations and economics and military operations secondarily. As a part of this effort to understand the enemy, this paper begins with an analysis of Al Qaeda's exploitation of the United States' weaknesses in facing non-state actors, Iran's use of terror proxies to spread the Islamic Revolution, and China's development of all forms of asymmetric warfare.

Al Qaeda's Exploitation of United States Weakness

Al Qaeda represents the largest, non-state sponsored terrorist organization that has conducted successful attacks against the West. Al Qaeda finds its roots in the Afghan mujahedin that fought against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989.¹² In a meeting that took place on Saturday, August 20, 1988, members of the Arab mujahedin leadership, including Osama bin Laden, established al-Qaeda al-Askariya (the military base).¹³

The two men most directly responsible for the rise of Al Qaeda are Dr. Abdullah al-Azzam and Osama bin Laden. Azzam is credited with designing the jihad against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. He also receives credit for the transforming that jihadist movement into what is now known as Al Qaeda. Bin Laden traveled to Afghanistan and joined Azzam in December 1979. While there, Bin Laden served as a recruiter of Arab and Islamic supporters to the mujahedin. It was also during the period from 1981 to 1991 that the United States secretly financed (approximately \$3 billion) the mujahedin's war against the Soviet Union.¹⁴

According to U.S. intelligence reports, at the conclusion of the Soviet occupation in 1988 there existed a network of Islamic volunteers numbering between 10,000 and 20,000 in Afghanistan. Bin Laden saw the opportunity to use these experienced fighters. His plan was to return the Al Qaeda volunteers to their home nations and try to overthrow secular, pro-Western Arab governments.¹⁵

Al Qaeda has been given credit for eight terrorist attacks against the United States from 1992 to 2000. Among these attacks are:

- The 1992 bombing of a hotel in Yemen where 100 U.S. military personnel were awaiting deployment to Somalia for Operation Restore Hope and the February 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center.
- Claiming responsibility for arming Somali factions who battled U.S. forces there in October 1993, and who killed 18 U.S. special operations operatives in Mogadishu in October 1993.
- The November 1995 bombing of a U.S. military advisory facility in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in which 5 Americans were killed.
- The June 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers complex near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia in which 19 U.S. airmen were killed.
- The August 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which killed about 300.
- The October 2000, USS Cole attack by a ship-borne suicide bombing while docked at Aden, Yemen. The ship was damaged and 17 sailors were killed.¹⁶

Each one of the attacks demonstrated an increase in lethality and the ability of Al Qaeda to strike both military and civilian targets. Bin Laden probably studied the historical response of the United States in planning and executing these attacks. The Al Qaeda leader was convinced that the United States had an aversion to battlefield casualties and would retreat after a severe blow.¹⁷ After the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, an event that has been credited to Hizbollah, the United States government withdrew all peace keeping forces from Lebanon.¹⁸ A similar reaction occurred after the October 1993 battle in Mogadishu, Somalia between U.S. Special Forces and members of General Mohamed Farrah Aidid's militia. Bin Laden claimed that Al Qaeda had 250 men in Somalia, sent there to fight U.S. Forces. He also attributed the downing of the helicopters and the desecration of the bodies to Al Qaeda operatives.¹⁹ In an al-Jazeera interview, Osama bin Laden said, "we learned that they saw the weakness, frailty, and cowardice of U.S. troops. Only eighteen U.S. troops were killed. Nonetheless, they fled in the heart of darkness, frustrated that they had caused great commotion about the New World Order."²⁰

In fact the United States did not respond to Al Qaeda attacks with any significant military action until after the August 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Two weeks after the bombings took place, the United States launched cruise missile attacks against Al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. Additionally, in July 1999 the United States government banned trade with Afghanistan and froze all Taliban assets.²¹ The successful, simultaneous attacks on multiple targets signaled a new and dangerous strategy for Al Qaeda. Death on a grand scale had become the standard for Al Qaeda.²²

Al Qaeda has enjoyed tactical success repeatedly since 1992. And, since September 11th, there have been several successful Al Qaeda attributed attacks in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the

Middle East. Al Qaeda has proven that such tactical success can influence a nation's governmental policy and the opinion of the population - ultimately having strategic effects. For example, in March 2004, Al Qaeda bombed four commuter trains in Madrid, Spain killing 190 and injuring another 1400.²³ In that same month during Spain's general elections, the population of Spain elected officials to parliament that did not support Spain's involvement in Iraq. By the end of April 2004, Spain had withdrawn all military forces from the coalition in Iraq.

Jordanian journalist Fouad Hussein outlined Al Qaeda's strategic plan in his book *Al-Zarqawi – al-Qaeda's Second Generation*.²⁴ After interviewing top leadership in Al Qaeda, Hussein wrote that Al Qaeda's master plan is to dominate the entire world and create a worldwide Islamic state. To accomplish this goal, Al Qaeda had developed a seven phase campaign. The first phase began with the September 11, 2001 attacks. The end state of that phase was to provoke the United States into a war with the Islamic world. In the second phase, Al Qaeda continues to build their network and fan the flames of fear of the Islamic world in the West. The second phase was to last until 2006. Phase three would see an increase in terrorist attacks against Turkey and Israel until 2010. Phase four would have terrorist attacks directed at Saudi Arabia and Jordan. The Islamic state is declared in phase five. Phase six is Al Qaeda's total war between the Islamic faithful and the rest of the world. Finally in phase seven, Al Qaeda declares victory and establishes the worldwide Islamic state. The worldwide victory comes in 2022.²⁵

Al Qaeda has seen success in the pursuit of its strategic goal, specifically in the first two phases. Whether or not the United States government intended the Global War on Terrorism to be seen as a war on the Islamic world, the Al Qaeda information machine has spun the U.S. actions in Afghanistan and Iraq as the return of the crusaders to the Islamic holy land. Even with

the loss of Afghanistan as a prime training and recruiting ground, Al Qaeda continues to build its network of fighters throughout the Middle East and Africa. According to Al Qaeda's timeline, they are currently working through the third phase.

The Combating Terrorism Center has identified five powers Al Qaeda, and other terrorist organizations, are capable of manipulating in order to advance their strategic goals. The five powers are: 1) the power to destroy; 2) the power to inspire; 3) the power to humiliate; 4) the power to command; and 5) the power to unify.²⁶ Al Qaeda is able to use these five powers to confront a nation state's ability to employ the instruments of national power: diplomacy, information operations, military and economics. The power to destroy is Al Qaeda's military capacity. With this power Al Qaeda establishes cells within a nation and executes attacks on security or law enforcement forces and civilian targets. Through the remaining four powers (inspire, humiliate, command and unify), Al Qaeda employs a holistic approach to diplomacy, information, and economics. Through these "soft" powers, Al Qaeda recruits new fighters, attempts to delegitimize a standing government, establishes itself as the vanguard of the Muslim world, and unifies and mobilizes affiliate organizations.²⁷ Al Qaeda does not rely solely on one or two of these powers to achieve its strategic goals. Rather, Al Qaeda challenges the United States and other nations across all five of these powers. The United States lacks a strategy to coordinate all four instruments of its national power to face Al Qaeda. The United States' use of the military to disrupt and destroy Al Qaeda on the tactical and operational level has not achieved the strategic goal, total destruction of the Al Qaeda network, which can be realized by fully integrating all the instruments of national power.²⁸

The analysis of Al Qaeda's success highlights the many holes in the United States ability to counter an unconventional threat. Al Qaeda's operations have led the United States to identify

intelligence and military improvements needed to be successful in a campaign against an unconventional, non-state actor.

Iran and Proxy Terrorism through Hizbollah

Iranian influence in Lebanon through the vessel of Hizbollah is a demonstration of a current nation state using proxy terrorism to not only influence, but also gain legitimate political power in another nation state's government. Iran has executed a successful campaign of terrorism, guerrilla warfare and political action in Lebanon. Iran now can look to its east and west and see the fragile, developing governments of Iraq and Afghanistan as targets of opportunity. By following similar campaigns in either or both of these countries, Iran could further spread its influence through the Middle East while at the same time undermining United States' interests in the region.

Hizbollah traces its roots back to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Israel's invasion into southern Lebanon to crush the Palestinian Liberation Organization was backed by the Lebanese (Maronite) government. In the aftermath of the invasion, Israel occupied southern Lebanon and its large population of radical Lebanese Shia. By this point, however, there was no standing group with a strong enough power base to consolidate the disorganized Islamic groups in the face of the occupying forces.²⁹

Iran seized the opportunity to spread the Islamic Revolution by moving to organize Shia groups in Lebanon that were dissatisfied with the government's willingness to negotiate with Israel. Iran, in the form of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and money, descended on Lebanon and began unifying Islamic Shia groups. The result was the formation of Hizbollah and the beginning of guerilla operations.³⁰

Hizbollah began operations with a series of suicide bombings on the United States embassy and American and French barracks in 1983. At this time, Hizbollah forged an alliance with the Syrian government, taking support when offered from that nation. Both Syria and Iran continued to provide money and training to Hizbollah. Additionally, Iranian-backed Hizbollah social service systems were built in southern Lebanon Shia communities, undermining the inadequate services provided by the Lebanese government.³¹

Hizbollah's operations grew from terrorist attacks to military operations and political action. During this time the Hizbollah military structure and political arm became as organized and structured as the Lebanese national forces and parties. Early on, Hizbollah guerrilla operations focused primarily on suicide bombings on Israeli targets and in countries as distant as Spain, Turkey and Argentina. As the IRGC continued to train and influence Hizbollah units, operations matured to kidnappings, assassinations, prisoner exchanges, and hijackings.³²

In 1991, Hizbollah leadership put their political aspirations into full force by participating in the Lebanese national elections. In the 1992 elections, Hizbollah captured 12 of the 128 parliament seats. In subsequent elections, Hizbollah has been able to maintain a ten percent of the seats in the parliament. In the 2000 elections Hizbollah had built enough political alliances to win 25 percent of all seats in the Lebanese parliament.³³

Iran's training and support of Hizbollah elevated the terrorist group's capabilities to a point where they rival those of a nation-state. By 2006, Hizbollah was able to use command and control systems including covered communication links, sensor systems, and remote-controlled night-vision systems. Hizbollah began using modern precision weapon systems capable of defeating Israeli armor. Using information operations that focused media coverage on

reconstruction and humanitarian assistance, Hizbollah gained legitimacy in the world view.

Stories were released to the mass media painting Hizbollah as a service providing organization in Lebanon that was fighting for survival.³⁴

Iran's success in developing Hizbollah as a military organization and political party in Lebanon provides the Iranian government with strategic flexibility in the prosecution of one of their stated goals, the destruction of the nation of Israel. Iran, through Hizbollah, now has the ability to significantly affect the Lebanese government. The military wing of Hizbollah is firmly established in Lebanon and free to continue organized military actions on Israel. Without launching a single attack from within its borders, Iran can prosecute a proxy war with Israel.

Iran's involvement in the 2006 Israel and Hizbollah war is nebulous. Since 1983, Iran has claimed to only provide "moral and spiritual support" to the Hizbollah movement.³⁵ However, Hizbollah forces were extremely well trained, disciplined and equipped using anti-tank weapons, communication systems, and an underground bunker system with a mobile defense plan.³⁶ All of these factors indicate that someone, most likely Iran, was continuing to develop the militant wing of Hizbollah.

While both sides claimed victory on the battlefield, Iran came out the big winner by being able to manipulate propaganda to advance its agenda. At the time of the conflict, the United States' unwillingness to confront Iran over missiles supplied to Hizbollah was portrayed as a sign of weakness on the part of Washington by the Iranian propaganda machine. In referring to the 2006 war, Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said, "It is clear to all the attack on Lebanon was premeditated, part of a joint American-Zionist stratagem, and is a major step towards domination of the Middle East and the Islamic world."³⁷

Iran has successfully exported the Shia based Islamic Revolution to Lebanon using Hizbollah. It is now conceivable that Iran could further spread the Revolution to Arab-Sunni countries using Hizbollah-like organizations and tactics. This has the potential of giving Iran hegemonic domination of the Middle East.³⁸

China's Holistic Asymmetric Warfare Plan

Much more so than Iran, China has embraced asymmetric warfare as a means for defeating a greater force. It is through unconventional warfare that China will seek to engage and defeat a technologically advanced adversary. China's approach to unconventional warfare is not confined to just asymmetric military operations. In the last twenty years, the Chinese government has looked at strategies that also include non-kinetic methods of warfare. These softer methods include economic, financial, informational and psychological instruments of national power.³⁹

In 1999, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) published the book *Unrestricted Warfare*. In this manual, the authors recommended tactics and techniques technologically inferior nations could employ in a war with the United States.⁴⁰ The authors propose that success in a war with the U.S. will require a nation to engage in a "beyond-limits combined war" and in order to achieve this kind of warfare, they propose eight principles of "beyond-limits combined war". These are omni-directionality, synchrony, limited objectives, unlimited measures, asymmetry, minimal consumption, multidimensional coordination, and adjustment and control of the entire process.⁴¹

The authors go into detailed definitions of each principle but taken holistically the eight principles essentially advise the weaker nation to exploit every environment (i.e. physical or

virtual), using all methods of attack at a level of intensity that can be easily managed and maintained. The definition of “asymmetry” essentially points to attacking in a manner that puts your adversary off balance, hitting “soft spots”, using forms of combat that include guerrilla tactics, terrorism, protracted war, and cyber warfare.⁴²

Unrestricted Warfare also points to non-military methods of achieving political ends. These methods include psychological, smuggling, media, network, drug, technological, fabrication (or counterfeit), economic aid, cultural and international law warfare.⁴³ These non-military means would require a nation employing the tactics and principles of *Unrestricted Warfare* to engage in and exploit the other instruments of national power; diplomacy, information operations, and economics.

The publication of *Unrestricted Warfare* and the continued development of information warfare, electromagnetic spectrum weapon systems and strategic communications capabilities, as well as the use of international business and trade, demonstrates China’s ability and willingness to engage in unconventional warfare with the United States and the rest of the world.

For example, in a bipartisan report on Chinese activities, the Cox Committee confirmed that the government of China uses companies to generate capital and obtain technology in the United States. Additionally the U.S. House’s Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare has identified companies like Cosco as “an arm of the Chinese military.” The task force pointed to a U.S. Customs raid on a Cosco ship that was smuggling 2,000 automatic weapons into the Port of Oakland.⁴⁴

China has also dedicated considerable effort to developing an information warfare capability. The scope of China’s information warfare development includes information

circulation and merging with kinetic means with end state of being able to weaken an opponent's information superiority and degrade the operational readiness of information equipment. In order to achieve information dominance, the PLA has heavily invested in both defensive and offensive electronic warfare systems and computer network operations. The PLA seeks early electromagnetic spectrum domination in a conflict coupled with computer network exploitation. These two information warfare concepts coupled with kinetic operations join to become what the PLA refers to "Integrated Network Electronic Warfare".⁴⁵

China's electromagnetic spectrum domination program includes development of direct energy weapons and laser systems. Chinese forces have tested low-power lasers on U.S. patrol aircraft and satellites. Experts at Northrop Grumman believe that China is moving to develop a solid-state laser which could be attached to a tactical fighter capable of destroying radar and communications nodes, power transmission stations and vehicles.⁴⁶

By analyzing Iran's successful insurgency campaign in Lebanon and China's multi-dimensional unconventional warfare strategy, the United States can identify its current capabilities and weaknesses and develop a strategy to counter an adversary that engages in unconventional warfare.

United States' Counter to Future Unconventional Adversaries

The ability of the United States to win in an unconventional conflict requires a shift in the thinking of the government, the military, and the people of the nation. The U.S. government will have to explain to the populace that unconventional adversaries will use any means necessary and strike any target in order to achieve success. It will require the American public realizing that they are now also on the frontline and subject to a level of brutality and violence that once

was only experienced by those in the military. The nation as a whole needs to understand that scenes like the aftermath of the 1983 Marine barracks bombing, the USS Cole attack, the Somalia raid, and 9/11 will become the norm and not the exception. The understanding that the unseen attacks, i.e. space/satellite warfare and cyber warfare, will become the first volley in the battle and can potentially be more damaging than a kinetic attack. In reality, to win in an unconventional war the United States must be willing to embrace and execute an unconventional strategy of its own. In short the United States must be prepared to take off the "white hat" and approach an adversary in a manner that generally has been unpalatable to the government and the people. Finally, the U.S. will also need to become less myopically reliant on the military aspect of national power and allow its diplomatic and informational strengths to develop more fully.

The United States needs to adopt a "whole of government"⁴⁷ approach to counter unconventional threats. This approach includes a continued dominance of conventional warfare, an understanding of the nature of unconventional warfare, a focus on advancing and developing new programs and technologies. Fighting a successful unconventional war is not just the job of the Department of Defense. It requires diplomatic maneuvering and coalition building by the State Department and employing economic methods, information and strategic communication strategies to isolate unconventional adversaries.

The United States needs to continue to dominate the conventional battlefield. Additionally, the U.S. government will need to fully integrate all the instruments of national power to deter and defeat an unconventional adversary. Success on the unconventional battlefield will require a continued expansion of the intelligence and Special Forces capabilities and the use of international alliances. The Nation's leadership must realize that every

eventuality cannot be predicted, but when the unforeseen does occur the government must be able to move rapidly to counter.

There is a clear threat of future adversaries using unconventional warfare and terrorism as a means to face the conventional military might of the United States. Nations like Iran have demonstrated that a successful subversive campaign is possible using terrorism, guerilla warfare and political influence to undermine the government of Lebanon and seat representatives influenced by Iran in the parliament of Lebanon. At the same time China continues to build nuclear arsenals and special operation forces capable of unconventional operations. In future conflict, the United States can expect "our adversaries, who employ a strategy of physical, economic, and psychological subversion, attrition, and exhaustion to undermine and erode the power, influence, and will of the United States and its strategic partners."⁴⁸

The massive nuclear arsenal of the United States may have been effective against the former Soviet Union in the Cold War but has become irrelevant against the asymmetric enemy. With a reduction in the current nuclear weapons program, money spent to develop and maintain the current nuclear capability could be diverted to programs that support advancing the U.S. ballistic and cruise missile defense, space defense and cyber-defense.⁴⁹

The United States cannot expect to win an unconventional war in a unilateral environment. In the case of Libya in the 1980s, the military offensives and economic sanctions of the United States against Libya had some impact on that nation but not enough to dissuade the government from continuing to support international terrorism. It was only after several United Nations diplomatic and economic resolutions that Muammar Qaddafi renounced terrorism and bowed to the will of the rest of the world.⁵⁰ Success in unconventional warfare lies in coalition

building and the use of all the instruments of national power. Nations engaging in unconventional warfare must not only be met with military might but also with political/diplomatic, informational and economic approaches in conjunction with other foreign powers.⁵¹

What will make an unconventional warfare campaign against the United States successful is the challenge that comes in identifying, predicting and countering an asymmetric threat. The 1983 bombing of the Marine Barracks in Lebanon, the USS Cole bombing, the October 1993 battle in Mogadishu, Somalia and the 9/11 attacks have a common thread. Each one of these events was executed as a surprise attack. While there may have been indications and warnings of each of these attacks, the U.S. intelligence community was unable to connect the dots and predict the next target or the level of destruction. Additionally, U.S. military forces found themselves flatfooted and unprepared to face an enemy of this nature.⁵²

The United States has taken steps to address the emerging unconventional threat. There have been reforms in the intelligence community and an expansion of Special Operations forces more suited for irregular warfare. Also, the U.S. is developing nonmilitary response programs capable of influencing the populations of an enemy that will employ unconventional warfare capabilities.⁵³ The development of essential services, the promotion of governance and economic development are non-kinetic methods the United States can use to undercut the authority of an adversary government over its population.⁵⁴

Former Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld framed the problem of future conflict for the United States as a matter of dealing with the unknown. Unlike the Cold War, unconventional adversaries present the United States with an unpredictable set of threats. The

challenge for U.S. military and civilian planners therefore becomes the ability to adapt rapidly and expect the unexpected. Secretary Rumsfeld goes so far as to say that it is probably impossible to detect and defend against every asymmetric threat that may come at the U.S. However, it may be possible to deter an adversary, nation or non-state actor, from attacking the United States in an unconventional fashion.⁵⁵

Accepting the fact that future conflict with an adversary nation will involve unconventional warfare in some form leads to the question of how the United States can face a dedicated unconventional threat and be successful. The conventional military might of the United States has not been a deterrent to terrorist organizations or insurgent forces.⁵⁶

The United States cannot afford to let its conventional military supremacy fall to the wayside in the wake of an increasing unconventional threat. Adversarial nations may choose to meet the U.S. in an asymmetrical manner, however the U.S. must still retain the ability to fight and win on the conventional battlefield. Additionally, while a conventional force may not be the ideal force to win an unconventional fight, the general purpose force still is relevant as the backbone to fighting in a campaign against an enemy that employs Special Forces in an unconventional role. Also, the conventional military might of the United States can act as a deterrent to nations considering conventional operations against U.S. interests.⁵⁷

The U.S. unconventional warfare strategy is not just a tool of the Department of Defense. Ideally the strategy will encompass all the elements of national power: economic, diplomatic, financial, law enforcement, intelligence and information.⁵⁸ That said the other U.S. governmental departments will need to understand the enemy and be able to counter that enemy in their area of influence.

The proposed unconventional warfare strategy is intended to work in concert with the existing and future National Security, Defense and Military strategies. U.S. adversaries have become so accustomed to the current conventional capabilities that an unconventional action by the United States would be completely unexpected. The U.S. would first approach an adversary nation with an ordinary and conventional response, whether that approach is diplomatically, militarily or economically, to fix their attention. While the enemy is fixed, the U.S. would launch an unconventional maneuver.⁵⁹ The unconventional maneuver could come in the form of a preemptive military strike, a cyber or telecommunications attack, a diplomatic expulsion or economic sanctions.⁶⁰ The point is the United States would approach in a manner that is unexpected or unpredictable based on the nation's usual response to an adversary. Using a preemptive campaign to destroy the enemy from within is not just a tool of the military. A preemptive strategy could be in the form of industrial espionage, having officials voted into power that favor U.S. policy (similar to Iran's use of Hizbollah in Lebanon's government) or pay-offs to large corporations to stop commerce with the adversary nation.⁶¹

Isolating a government that employs an unconventional strategy will deny them the ability to engage targets and subvert the population. Military blockades, economic sanctions and severing diplomatic ties are the overt methods to isolate a nation.⁶² However, in order to truly isolate a nation, the United States will have to build alliances with countries that are regional neighbors to the government to be isolated. Alliances are built through offers of economic and military assistance and diplomatic recognition. But alliances can also be built by preying on the fears of neighboring governments. By employing an information and communications strategy that paints the adversary nation in an unfavorable light, capable of dominating a region with its nuclear, cyber or other unconventional capabilities, the United States will draw the support

needed to defeat that adversary. Isolation will bring hardships on the population of the adversary nation.⁶³ Employing a communication strategy that targets the population of an isolated adversary will result in either the people of the nation revolting against the government or the government succumbing to pressure to abandon an unconventional campaign. The goal of the communications strategy is to make the population think, "What have our leaders gotten us into?"⁶⁴

In order to implement an unconventional warfare strategy, the United States would need to have a new governmental office to oversee campaigns against adversaries. Dr. David J. Kilcullen suggested that an Office of Strategic Services (OSS), similar to the organization of the same name from World War II, be created to engage unconventional threats. He proposes that the office include, "analysis, intelligence, anthropology, special operations, information, psychological operations and technology capabilities."⁶⁵ Ideally the new OSS would be capable of rapidly and efficiently coordinating multiple governmental agencies and producing an effective counter to a threat or executing a national unconventional warfare strategy.

Conclusion

The domination of the conventional battlefield is no longer a deterrent to a potential adversary nation. Future adversaries know it is a fruitless endeavor to face "the United States fighter to fighter, ship to ship, tank to tank."⁶⁶ The United States has a history of being unprepared to deal with an unknown, unpredictable, or asymmetric threat. Additionally, until the start of the Global War on Terrorism, the U.S. government's response to unconventional threats has been limited military strikes and some economic sanctions. These reactions have had limited

success but have not dissuaded current nations from developing unconventional warfare programs to engage the United States with.

The knee-jerk reaction cannot be for the U.S. to abandon its conventional military capability. Rather, the U.S. government, military, and population needs to come to grips with the fact that future conflict will be either partially or fully unconventional in nature with attacks coming in kinetic and non-kinetic forms. Secretary of Defense Gates has written, "As defense scholars have noted, these hybrid scenarios combine the 'lethality of state conflict with the fanatical protracted fervor of irregular warfare.'"⁶⁷ It is conceivable that a future attack on the U.S. may not involve a single bullet, but could come as an assault on the economy, telecommunications infrastructure or industrial complex.

The United States needs to adopt a new definition of full-spectrum operations. Previously this phrase was equated to the combined arms concept used by the military. In order to defeat an unconventional threat, full-spectrum operations must encompass all the instruments of national power and be able to meet the unconventional adversary at their level and if possible preempt their attack. It will require the U.S. to develop an unconventional strategy and the capability to employ that strategy. Through economics, diplomacy, information operations, propaganda, alliance building, military might, governmental subversion and fear, the United States can defeat an unconventional enemy.

Endnotes

- ¹ (Polk 2007, xiii)
- ² (Polk 2007, vi)
- ³ (The Joint Staff 2007, I-1)
- ⁴ (National Defense Strategy 2008, 2-9)
- ⁵ (Gates 2009, 3)
- ⁶ (Kilcullen 2007, 41)
- ⁷ (Gates 2009, 2)
- ⁸ (Davis 1990, ix)
- ⁹ (Wright 2006, 213-214)
- ¹⁰ (National Defense Strategy 2008, 4)
- ¹¹ (National Defense Strategy 2008, 3)
- ¹² (Katzman August 17, 2005, 1)
- ¹³ (Wright 2006, 152)
- ¹⁴ (Katzman August 17, 2005, 1-2)
- ¹⁵ (Katzman August 17, 2005, 2)
- ¹⁶ (Katzman August 17, 2005, 4-5)
- ¹⁷ (Wright 2006, 214)
- ¹⁸ (Goodes and Moore Volume X, Issue 1 (December 2007), 5)
- ¹⁹ (Wright 2006, 215)
- ²⁰ (Wright 2006, 215)
- ²¹ (Katzman August 17, 2005, 5)
- ²² (Wright 2006, 307)
- ²³ (Cronin March 31, 2004, 4)
- ²⁴ (Hall 2005, 1)
- ²⁵ (Hall 2005, 1)
- ²⁶ (Combating Terrorism Center Staff 2009, 1)
- ²⁷ (Combating Terrorism Center Staff 2009, 2-4)
- ²⁸ (Combating Terrorism Center Staff 2009, 4)
- ²⁹ (Goodes and Moore Volume X, Issue 1 (December 2007), 3-4)
- ³⁰ (Goodes and Moore Volume X, Issue 1 (December 2007), 4)
- ³¹ (Goodes and Moore Volume X, Issue 1 (December 2007), 4-5)
- ³² (Goodes and Moore Volume X, Issue 1 (December 2007), 5)
- ³³ (Goodes and Moore Volume X, Issue 1 (December 2007), 6-7)
- ³⁴ (Royston Volume X, Issue 1 (December 2007), 45-48)
- ³⁵ (Tisdall 2006)
- ³⁶ (Moore 2007, 17-18)
- ³⁷ (Tisdall 2006)
- ³⁸ (Paz 2007)
- ³⁹ (White House 2008, 13)
- ⁴⁰ (Qiao and Xiangsui February 1999, 2)
- ⁴¹ (Qiao and Xiangsui February 1999, 204-205)
- ⁴² (Qiao and Xiangsui February 1999, 204-215)
- ⁴³ (Qiao and Xiangsui February 1999, 55)

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- ⁴⁴ (Schweizer 2000, 17A)
⁴⁵ (White House 2008, 21-22)
⁴⁶ (Fulghum and Barrie 2008, 30)
⁴⁷ (Combating Terrorism Center Staff 2009, 4)
⁴⁸ (Coons JR and Harned 2009, 97)
⁴⁹ (Rumsfeld 2002, 5)
⁵⁰ (Collins 2004, 10-13)
⁵¹ (Coons JR and Harned 2009, 98)
⁵² (Dahl 2005, 31-33)
⁵³ (Kilcullen 2007, 42)
⁵⁴ (McDaniel 2006, vi-vii)
⁵⁵ (Rumsfeld 2002, 2-3)
⁵⁶ (Rumsfeld 2002, 5)
⁵⁷ (Coons JR and Harned 2009, 98)
⁵⁸ (Rumsfeld 2002, 6)
⁵⁹ (Greene 2006, 313)
⁶⁰ (Rumsfeld 2002, 6)
⁶¹ (Greene 2006, 407)
⁶² (Greene 2006, 343)
⁶³ (Greene 2006, 355)
⁶⁴ (Greene 2006, 393)
⁶⁵ (Kilcullen 2007, 46)
⁶⁶ (Gates 2009, 3)
⁶⁷ (Gates, The National Defense Strategy: Striking the Right Balance 1st quarter 2009, 5)

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